

Avatar



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SUN, SAND, OIL?

GULF OIL DISASTER 2010

CAUSE OF THE MONTH:

VITAMIN ANGELS

NEW!

SATIRICAL COLUMN,
BOARD GAME OF THE
MONTH, MOTIVATION
STATION, AND MORE!

SAFE SUMMER SEX

REDECORATE
YOUR SPACE

Cover art: Stephanie (Konstantine)



EDITORS' LETTER

Hello everyone, and welcome to this issue of Avatar.

We hope that you're all taking some time to soak up the sun and enjoy the start of your summer break!

July is a fabulous month. It is the month of new found time, relaxation, and a brand new design for Avatar. That's right, Avatar is now in its fourth volume! As we're sure you've all noticed, some major changes occurred since we saw you last. With a fresh design, new and exciting content, and a few fun surprises along the way, we're excited to reveal to you all of our hard work. Don't worry, though, we didn't change everything! We still offer the same variety of fun and advice that you've loved all along.

We'd like to start this issue by welcoming two new Avatar Editors to the team! Please join us in welcoming Chess (x.Psychic Crisis.x) as Avatar's Deputy Content Editor and Robin (PSY), who joins us to give fabulous advice and information as a Sub-Editor of Mind and Body. We're really excited to have them both with us!

In other news, we'll be kicking things off in **News & Debates** this month with an article covering the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. We also bring you a review of other major or important events that occurred in June 2010, in addition to our July **Cause of the Month**, Vitamin Angels.

In **Mind & Body** this month you'll find the informative article "Eye Injury Prevention Month & UV Safety Month", which includes some preventative measures you can take to ensure that you don't have excessive UV exposure. Here you will also find a piece on safe summer sex and a short, informative article on HIV and AIDS. While you're there, don't forget to check out our advice to you in **Dear Avatar!**

Moving on to **Lifestyle**, we have just what you need to get going, starting off with an article that discusses the Tour de France. Also in Lifestyle is an informative piece on how you can stay cool, and safe, at the pool, plus some awesome tips on redecorating your space!

Don't forget to check out **Fun & Games**, which includes a new satire column and an awesome article on a selected board game, as well as the brand new Motivation Station! And, as always, be sure to check out this month's **Self Expression** and your July **Horoscopes!**

We hope you have a great month,
The Avatar Editors.

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Are you a writer? Photographer? Artist? We need your submissions! Valuable contributions from readers like you are what make Avatar so unique and successful! Please consider emailing your submission to avatar@teenhelp.org or submit content online by visiting www.teenhelp.org/avatar/submit.

feature

ON 7

SAFE SUMMER SEX
BY HOLLY MARIE (RIE)



Summer flings can be fun, and many teens have them, but engaging in any sexual activities with someone you just met can be risky. Find out how to protect yourself this summer, whether you're in it for the long-term or only while school is out!

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NEWS

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SUN, SAND, OIL?

By Casey (Casey.)

We've all heard of the current oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Hundreds of thousands of gallons of oil are pouring into the Gulf daily, which is frightening to many. This is the largest offshore oil spill that has been recorded in U.S. history, and it's taking a huge toll on the environment. Threatening the endangered coral reefs, it is also upsetting many local fishermen. What really happened, though?

On April 22nd 2010 an offshore drilling rig exploded, killing eleven platform workers and injuring many others on board. The explosion was serious, to say the least, and it caused the rig to burn and sink. Following this, oil started to spill through the waters. At first it was considered a minor incident; something that would take a few days to fix. Currently, however, the oil has been flowing for just over two months, and shows no sign of stopping anytime soon. BP has made many attempts to clean up the oil spill and, although they have made progress, there is still more oil and gas spilling out than they can contain.

Could the spill have been prevented? Well, many sources say

different things. BP took short cuts, short cuts that did more damage in the end than would have happened otherwise. BP's wellhead was equipped with a blowout preventer as it is required to be, but there was no remote-control or acoustically activated triggers to use in case of an emergency. Additionally, the

well had a dead man's switch designed to seal off the pipes to the well if communication was lost, but it wasn't activated. Prior to the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon there was also high pressure gas coming from the well, the blowout preventer had been damaged, and officials were against the protests of some of the drillers using cheaper and more dangerous methods to keep the pressure in the well down.

BP is taking measures to help with those that this oil spill has affected. The oil spill is not just damaging the environment and destroying the homes of many sea creatures; it is also destroying the homes and livelihoods of people. Fishermen, especially, are affected. The oil can setback the fishing industry for years if it is not stopped soon, and it is already costing fishermen part of their income, since it is killing the fish and clams. BP has set aside a trust fund of twenty billion dollars to help with relief for the coast. They are paying for the damage they cause and any legitimate claims that they receive, including those for property damage and loss of wages.

Aside from monetary compensa-





tions there are some measures in place, like sand walls to prevent the oil from reaching beaches and the endangered coral and boom to contain large patches of oil, but sludgy trash still makes its way to the beaches. Many animals, especially birds, are dying from the oil, either by ingesting it or because their bodies become weighed down with it. Turtles and fish, too, are being affected.

So what can you do to help? For starters, if you live near a beach that has oil sludge on it, you can help to clean it up. Picking up the sludge will help, as will picking up any garbage you find on the beach. The oil will not harm you as long as you don't ingest it, but you can wear gloves to avoid contact with it. You can also help by volunteering at an animal hospital that is taking in oil-covered creatures, or by trying to safely help animals you might find on the beach. It is better to call an animal hospital or service if you find any animals instead of trying to take care of them yourself, however, as they are wild animals and may hurt you. Dish soap and mayonnaise are the two main cleaners being used to dislodge oil off of birds and sea turtles (the mayonnaise is for the turtles shell). Donating these or money to your local animal hospital would also help. There is very little that we can do to clean up the oil in the gulf right now, however we can still help along our beaches and coasts. Every bit of help goes a long way. ■

CAUSE: VITAMIN ANGELS

By Katrina

How many times have you heard Mom or Dad say, "Alright, be sure to take your vitamins!" More than you can count? Yeah, me too. They don't say it for no reason, though. Specific vitamins are vital for immune systems; without them, we wouldn't be able to fight off infections and would always be sick. Vitamin Angels understands the importance of vitamins to children and infants:

"Our mission is to mobilize and deploy private sector resources to advance availability, access and use of micronutrients, especially vitamin A, by newborns, infants and children in need. Vitamin Angels reduces child mortality worldwide by connecting essential nutrients, especially vitamin A, with infants and children under five."

Vitamin Angels focuses on two types of vitamins, specifically, that they feel are especially important to keeping children healthy and happy: Vitamin A and Multivitamins. Currently, an estimated 190 million children suffer from Vitamin A Deficiency, leaving them hugely negatively impacted by diseases as common to us as a seasonal cold. Vitamin Angels find the solution in just one high dosage of Vitamin A, which can secure a child with sufficient Vitamin A with up to six months! To combat this, Operation 20/20, Vitamin Angels' international vitamin A distribution campaign, combines vitamin A to anti-parasitic treatments, and connects this essential vitamin to infants, children, and lactating women.

"In 2010, Operation 20/20 will reach about 20,000,000 infants and children, and another approximately 4,000,000 lactating women in 30 countries on three continents."

Vitamin Angels other current large project is Thrive to Five, an international multi-vitamin campaign. This program is geared towards children under five years of age who are suffering from or struggling with malnutrition. In addition, the Thrive to Five programs seeks to connect expectant mothers with sufficient vitamins to ensure that their child lives a healthy lifestyle. Vitamin Angels collaborates with many of their partners to be able to do this.

"As a result, Thrive to Five currently distributes around 100 million doses of essential micronutrients annually in about 20 countries on four continents, including the United States."

For more information about these two projects as well as some of the other wonderful things Vitamin Angels is doing, please visit:

www.vitaminangels.org. ■



NEWS & DEBATES

JUNE 2010 IN REVIEW

By Brittany (.Brittany.) and Jes (Asylum)

While you're enjoying summer, it can become increasingly difficult to commit time to keeping up with the current affairs of the world. In case you missed the headlines, here's a glimpse of what people were talking about (or should have been!) in June 2010.

Health

Mobile Mental "Medicine". Depressed? While a mobile application for your shiny phone might not cure your depression, mental health experts agree that such programs may help. Apps like "Mobile Mood Diary" and "Mobile Therapy" can be used to track your moods and are available 24/7/365. What's to lose?

DSM and Binge Eating. Experts

recommend binge eating be included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders V, due for release in 2010, as an eating disorder. The most common eating disorder in the United States, binge eating is difficult to diagnose and treat, but remains a very serious condition.

Cut the... Salt? Too many Americans eat too much salt, says a new report from the Center for Disease Control (CDC). A survey found that the average daily intake is 3,500 milligrams of sodium, a whopping 1,200 milligrams more than the recommended daily intake. What can you do to consume less sodium? Eat less prepackaged foods, don't add table salt to your food, eat home-cooked meals, cut down on processed grains, and eat appropriately sized portions of meat.

Entertainment

Man in the Mirror. The one year anniversary of Michael Jackson's death was met with tears this June, as his profound legacy lives on and fans pay tribute to his life across the globe.

Environment and Natural Disaster

Out of the Ordinary. A deadly heatwave struck India and South Asia this month, with temperatures reaching 53C (127F). Also in June a 5.0 magnitude earthquake struck Ontario, Quebec and several states, lasting 20 seconds; there are no reported injuries.

Politics and Finances

G8. On June 25th the "great eight", or group of eight, gathered at the annual G8 Summit in Huntsville, Ontario. Topics of discussion this year included nuclear proliferation, peace, security and development. Leaders in attendance included Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Italian Prime Minister Silvia Berlusconi, Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, United Kingdom's Prime Minister David Cameron, United States president Barack Obama, and the European Union President Jose Manuel Barroso.

G20. In Late June the Toronto G20 Summit saw finance ministers and central bank governors gather from nineteen countries to discuss the global financial crisis. Countries in attendance included Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Republic of Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom, and United States of America.

For more news check out the Current Events and Debates forum, or reputable online sources BBC or CNN!





MIND AND BODY

EYE INJURY PREVENTION & UV SAFETY MONTH | SAFE SEX | HIV/AIDS | DEAR AVATAR

EYE INJURY PREVENTION & UV SAFETY MONTH

By Stephanie (Konstantine)

Our vision is vital. From seeing your loved ones and your environment, to watching your favourite films, eyesight is

something that we use everyday and something that we may take for granted. July is Eye Injury Prevention Month and UV Safety Month, which aim to spread awareness of how to protect your eyesight. A massive ninety percent of eye injuries could be prevented if appropriate precautions are taken.

It is important to be aware of your eyesight constantly, no matter where you are or what you're are doing. When indoors, be particularly careful if you're doing any household chores which use chemicals and always work in a ventilated area, ensuring chemicals are not being directed towards your face, including your eyes, mouth and nose. Many everyday household cleaners contain chemicals that can damage eyes or even cause blindness. The same precautions should be taken when engaging in other work, especially hands-on activities, because flying objects and particles can be very dangerous.

It seems to be getting sunnier at this time of year. Being outdoors in summer can be

wonderful, but it's also important to be aware of the sun's rays and the ultraviolet radiation (UV rays) that accompany the warm weather. A small amount of UV is actually good for you, as it helps produce vitamin D in your body. However, if you are exposed to too many UV rays, it could result in negative health effects for your immune system, skin and eyes.

Hats, sunglasses, protective clothing and regular application of sunscreen are all suggested as good, preventative measures against excessive UV exposure. Whenever you can, you should limit your time in the sun between 10am and 4pm, staying in the shade when possible. When selecting sunscreen, try to choose one that has an SPF of at least 15 and when choosing sunglasses, ensure that they are UV-protective. These are not difficult things to do, but can save you from a lot of serious problems later in life.

If you experience an eye injury, never hesitate to seek medical help. Injuries such as cuts, burns or foreign bodies should never be solely self-treated. Early detection of any other eye conditions that you feel you may have is also essential to trying to maintain good vision. If you do notice any changes such as seeing flashes of light or spots, have any pain or excessive tearing or dryness, you should see an eye doctor as soon as possible. ■



MIND AND BODY

SAFE SUMMER SEX

By Holly Marie (Rie)

It's almost summer fling time! We all know of summer flings and many of us have had them. Maybe it's all caused by the heat, or we're all intoxicated by "summer fever". Just like Danny and Sandy in *Grease*, a little bit of summer lovin' never did any harm, right? It's the perfect time of year to get out and about meeting new people. Whether you plan on having sex or just making friends, it's worth remembering to stay safe under the sun. A summer fling can give you wonderful memories, but it can also leave you heartbroken. All summer flings have to come to an end, whether the autumn blues put out the spark, or life gets in the way.

When the sun comes up, people tend to strip down. While sex may seem tempting surrounded by the sounds of the surf, the sand, and the heat, it's worth remembering that you don't know your summer fling's sexual history. Safe sex means actively preventing the risk of unplanned pregnancy and catching a sexually transmitted infection. Remember that you can have a sexually transmitted infection and show no signs, but still pass it onto partners. There is always a risk of catching a sexually transmitted disease if you are engaging in any form of sexual activity. As a general rule you should use a condom or a dental dam for any type of sex, even oral sex, especially if you don't know your partner's past history. Some people say that if you're not mature enough to buy condoms, you're not mature enough to have sex.

It's worth remembering that sex on the beach, while tempting, can be painful. Best use a blanket to avoid getting sand in the vagina or

openings in the penis, which can be extremely painful. Sand can tear the condom, leaving you at risk of infections and upping the risk of pregnancy. Wiping the sand out with a wet-wipe and urinating can help remove sand from the urethra. Sex in the sea, pool, or even a hot tub introduces bacteria from the water into the vagina. This leaves you at risk of getting urinary tract infections and other such infections. If you're using a condom, there's a chance of the condom falling off, because of the water. If you're using spermicidal gel, remember that it can be washed out. There is still a risk of pregnancy from sex in water. Take note if you plan on having sex out in the open that it takes thirty minutes for sunscreen to start working.

Oral sex is generally less risky when it comes to getting or passing on an infection; however, some sexually transmitted illnesses can still be passed on by oral sex. To put it simply; unprotected oral sex puts you at risk for numerous sexually transmitted diseases. Don't get semen or blood in your mouth, and be sure to avoid oral sex altogether if you have mouth ulcers, bleeding gums, or cold sores. Don't brush your teeth immediately before having oral sex as this can cause small tears and bleeding in your gums. Keep your nails short if you plan on putting your fingers inside another person to prevent rips and tears, and be sure to thoroughly clean your nails before putting them near your mouth. Try using flavoured condoms for oral sex involving a penis, lip gloss, lip stick and other oil based products will damage the condom. For oral-vaginal and anal sex use a dental dam. If you have had your fingers in someone else's vagina, it's a good idea to wash your hands using hot water and anti-bacterial soap before touching your eyes or another persons body. If you're going to be engaging in anal fisting, exposing yourself to



any blood, or just want to be extra safe, try using latex 'examination gloves' (the type doctors use).

Vaginal intercourse is risky when it comes to sexually transmitted illnesses and unwanted pregnancy. The single most effective thing to do when having sexual intercourse is to use a condom. Men should experiment with different condoms as all condoms are not the same. To prevent tears and unwanted pregnancy it's important to ensure the condom is on correctly and is the right size. To put a condom on correctly you must pinch the tip of the condom as you unroll it all the way down to prevent air bubbles. It's important to hold the base of the condom while withdrawing so it doesn't slip off. Sperm can live for up to five days if it is kept in a warm moist area, such as the cervix of a woman. It is a myth that oxygen kills sperm. If you choose to use sex toys be sure not to share them. Clean them thoroughly before and after use, and use a condom.

Anal sex is a higher risk activity because the tissue of the anus and rectum can be damaged easily. Anal sex without a condom is very risky behaviour. Couples must ensure that the anal area is clean and the bowel is empty. Whether penetration occurs using fingers or a penis a condom is the best way to avoid sexually transmitted infections is to use a condom, and to wash after continuing to avoid bacteria transferring from the rectum to the vagina. Since the rectum can easily be damaged it is recommended to use plenty of lubrication. Condoms will also prevent pregnancy from oral sex.

Whether you're looking for a summer fling, casual sex, or a long term relationship, make sure you keep healthy and enjoy the heat of the summer. ■

For more information on safer sex practices check out the Articles section of TeenHelp, or ask on the Support Forums!

MIND AND BODY

WHAT IS HIV & AIDS?

By Casey (Casey.)

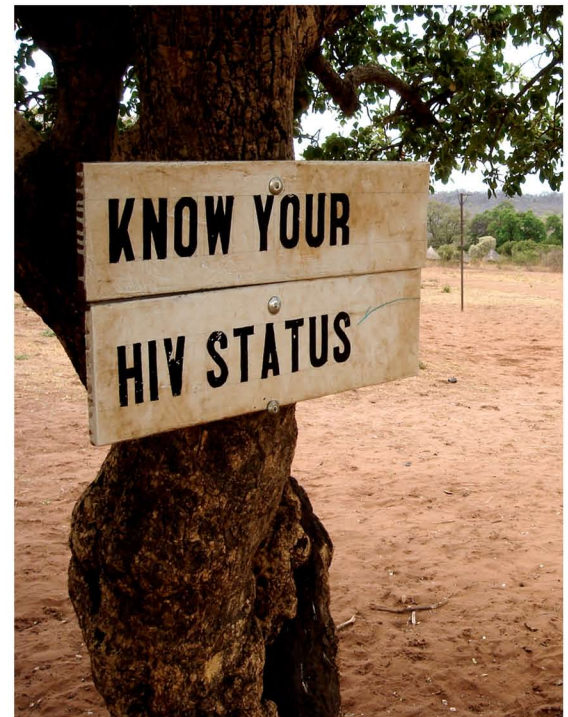
AIDS. You've heard the term before. You have probably never thought of it affecting you. You have never known anyone who has AIDS, and you don't want to. You fear people who have AIDS. You may view them as unclean and dirty, but what do you really know about AIDS? Not much? Sure you know it's a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that can be deadly. But what is AIDS? How do you get AIDS?

What is AIDS? AIDS, or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, is a disease that affects millions of people around the globe. AIDS is caused by the HIV virus. HIV, or Human Immunodeficiency Virus, attacks your immune system. As your immune system weakens, you become very sick. Your body has a very difficult time fighting off infections, even common ones, such as a cold. The sicker you become, the weaker your immune system becomes. After a while, HIV can develop into the illness known as AIDS. When you have AIDS, your body can no longer protect itself by fighting off infections. When a person with HIV can no longer produce antibodies or white blood cells they are diagnosed with AIDS.

How do you contract AIDS? Technically people do not contract AIDS, they become infected with HIV. HIV is a sexually transmitted infection that can be transmitted through sexual contact involving penetration and, rarely, from oral sex. HIV can also be transmitted

when an uninfected person comes into contact with the blood of someone who has HIV, as well as from sharing needles. The virus can also be passed between a mother and her unborn child, or from mother to child by breast milk. Common misconceptions are that you can get HIV from hugging, kissing, sharing food, bathrooms, tears, or dishes, but these are not true.

Anyone can contract HIV if they are sexually active or if they come into contact with infected blood. Although the virus is most prevalent in underdeveloped countries, no one is immune. To prevent the



transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, always engage in safer sex practices (use condoms), don't share needles, and know your HIV status. ■

DEAR AVATAR



Recently an older girl who I'm friends with asked me about my scars and really opened up to me about her problems with self harm. I was really happy that she spoke to me, I feel like she didn't judge me and was really supportive. She says I can go to her anytime but I feel uncomfortable asking her for support when I know she still struggles herself. I'm torn between asking her for help to selfishly support myself or not asking so as not to put any more on her plate.

This sounds like a really difficult situation, one I'm sure that many people have tackled before you.

Firstly, I just want to ask you how you would feel if you were in her position? This may seem like an odd or difficult thing to do, but think about it...would she offer to help you if she didn't feel as though she could cope with it? If you think that no, she wouldn't offer to help you if she didn't feel like she could cope, then I guess the answer is pretty simple, it would be great for you to be able to confide in her and for you two to be able to support each other!

However, if the answer is yes, she would offer to help you, even if she wasn't coping herself, then that makes things a little trickier. I think that the best thing for you to do in that situation would be to take things slowly. Start by feeding her little bit of information, asking for help on little things and see how well she copes with them, eventually building up, trusting her with gradually bigger and bigger things until you can speak with her about anything. This will mean that if you feel like she isn't coping, you

don't have to 'offload' the bigger things onto her, therefore protecting her a bit. Though, often, it can actually help people to help their peers so this communication could be of benefit to both of you!

The last thing I want to say is that in your question you said 'asking for help to selfishly support myself'. I just want to mention that it is never selfish to reach out for help, sometimes we may reach out to the wrong people, or the wrong things, but reaching out for help is not a selfish act. Maybe if your friend can't help you, you could speak to someone else like a doctor or a counsellor about your self harm?



How do you tell your parents if you are feeling depressed? My Mum once found out that I was suicidal and came home crying, I don't think that I could handle that again. So, how do you get through depression without telling my parents? Or should I tell them?

Depression affects many people all over the world of many different ages. It can be really hard to cope with, both for the sufferer and for their friends and family.

With regards to telling your family, this can be really difficult step, as it can often be hardest to tell the people closest to us, about what's bothering us. It sounds like you haven't had an easy experience with your Mum finding things out before which is making you a bit apprehensive about telling her how you feel now, which is totally understandable.

There are a number of different

ways that you could tell your Mum, should you choose to. You could try sitting down with her and explaining things calmly and quietly, making sure she knows that it's not her fault. You could try writing it down and giving it to her. Or if you see a doctor/counsellor, perhaps they could help you tell her? They'd also be able to support you both, after she'd found out.

Of course, you don't have to tell your parents, though it can be easier if they do know what's going on as it can help explain some of your moods and feelings. If you don't tell them though, then I would strongly suggest letting another adult know how you feel. Whether that is a doctor, a teacher, a counsellor or just another adult you trust. Talking things through can often really help people suffering with depression, so hopefully you'd be able to talk through things with one of these people and they could offer you some support during this difficult time.

So in answer to your question, I guess it's up to you whether you tell your parents or not as everyone's situation is different, however, I would strongly advise you to speak to another adult you trust, if you chose not to speak to your parents.



I can't stop harming myself. If it's not one way, it's another. I've been drinking, cutting, smoking, taking pills, not eating, making myself throw up, burning myself, etc. I can't stop. Please help!

I'm sorry that you're having such a difficult time right now. It sounds like things aren't easy in your life and you're struggling to deal with whatever is going on in your head.

DEAR AVATAR

Firstly, I just want to let you know that you're not alone, there are a lot of people who have experienced similar things before and used similar methods of coping, and there are a lot of people who care about you and will want to help you.

The thing about all of these coping mechanisms is that they're all symptoms of emotions and thoughts inside of you. As they're all about harming yourself, they're likely to stem from feelings of low self-worth, among other things. One of the first things that it would be great for you to try and to is to build up your self confidence. You could do this in a number of ways, say something nice about yourself every time you look in the mirror, pamper yourself every now and again, do something for YOU every single day...whether that be doing something you enjoy or occasionally buying yourself little treats. Doing things like this will hopefully help you to see yourself in a better light, making you feel better all around.

Another thing about these actions, is that they often stem from triggers. You should try and identify your triggers. Do you do these things when you're angry? Upset? Frustrated? Is it after you've had a fight with your Mum or after you've failed a homework assignment? Learning what's causing these feelings and causing you to harm yourself can help you to learn how to cope with things in a more constructive manner.

Finally, do you have a counsellor or someone who you can talk to? I think it would be great for you to have someone who you could talk through your feelings with. Someone who can help you to work out your triggers and help you to find alternative coping methods. Don't go this alone. A list of the types of people who you could try talking to can be found on TeenHelp.

Recently people have been leaving anonymous questions on my Formspring which have been really mean, I don't want to think I'm being cyber-bullied but I can't just keep ignoring them because they're really upsetting me. I don't know what to do.

It sounds like people really aren't being nice to you right now, which is something that can be really hard to deal with.

Firstly, I want you to remember that the stuff that people are saying on Formspring is almost certainly not true. I'm sure that you're a wonderful person with many talents; don't let them knock your confidence!

Secondly, as Formspring is an anonymous service, it means

even less. As people clearly are not willing to say these things to your face and have to hide behind the computer screen and an 'anonymous' label, it almost makes their opinion completely invalid. Whoever is saying these things to you is clearly a coward who has nothing better to do with their life than spam other people's Formsprings. You're a better person than they are, I would try and ignore it.

If it's all beginning to get too much, then I think the best thing you could do is to delete your account or disable the option for people to ask questions anonymously. If you do delete your account and want to make a new one, then it might be an idea to only let your closest friends know how to access it.

I hope this helps, try not to let it get to you too much! All the best.

CONTACT

Need advice? Would you like your question to be featured in Dear Avatar? If so, contact us! Email us your question to avatar@teenhelp.org or submit any content to the Editors at www.teenhelp.org/avatar/submit

VACANCY

Do you enjoy Dear Avatar? Think you have what it takes to be a vital and vibrant member of the Avatar team? If you have 25 posts and have been registered for at least one month, submit your application for Sub-Editor of Dear Avatar now at www.teenhelp.org/apply!

L I F E



TOUR DE FRANCE | POOL SAFETY | REDECORATE YOUR SPACE

THE TOUR DE FRANCE

By Brittany (.Brittany.)



The Tour de France is an annual bike race that attracts bikers from all over the world. The race covers approximately 3,600 kilometres (2,200 miles), over the course of twenty-one days. For the past ninety-seven years the race has been held, but the course changes each year. Regardless of the course, though, it always ends in Paris. The race is broken down

into day long stages, or segments. In the twenty-one days of the race, there are usually two rest days. Usually those two days are used to transport racers from one end of a race to the beginning of the next. The races change between counterclockwise and clockwise circuits of France. The first counterclockwise circuit was held in 1913. The shortest tour was held in 1904, at only 2,420 kilometres

(1,500 miles), and the longest race was in 1926, which was 5,745 kilometres (3,570 miles).

The number of teams varies between 20-22, with nine riders on each. The Amaury Sport Organization sends invitations to the teams that have been chosen. The team members help each other, while managers and paramedics follow in cars.

The overall winner of the race, is determined by all the times totaled together. So even if you lose a few stages, you can still win, just like Greg LeMond did in 1990. The rider with the lowest time at the end of each race wears a yellow jersey. The youngest winner of the race was Henri Cornet, age nineteen, in 1904. Next youngest was Romain Maes, age twenty-one, in 1935. The oldest winner was Firmin Lambot, age thirty-six, in 1922. The next oldest were Henri Pelissier (1923) and Gino Bartali (1948), both age thirty-four. Gino Bartali the longest time span between titles, having earned his first and last Tour victories ten years apart (in 1938 and 1948). Riders from France have won most (36), followed by Belgium (18), Spain (12), United States (10), Italy (9), Luxembourg (4), Switzerland and the Netherlands (2 each) and Ireland, Denmark and Germany (1 each).

Stage Points

In the current rules, there are five types of stages: flat stages, intermediates stages, mountain stages, individual time trial stages and team time trial stages. Points are higher for flat stages, as sprints are more likely, and less for mountain stages, where climbers usually win. The green jersey (maillot vert) is awarded for sprint points. King of the mountains wear white jerseys with red dots (maillot a pois rouges). At the end of each stage, points are earned by the riders who finish first, second, third, and so on.

The number of points awarded at the end of each stage vary depending on place. For more information visit www.letour.fr. ■

BE AWARE: STAY COOL AT THE POOL

By Katrina

July is upon us, and we know what that means: hot summer rays from the golden sun, pesky mosquitoes coming out in the afternoon, tons of time to hang out with friends or summer flings, and the prime time season at every outdoor pool. Unfortunately, according to Time magazine, there were "175,000 [drownings in the year 2009]. Parental supervision, CPR education and fenced swimming pools are crucial." Most of us have heard and read tips on staying safe in the summer heat, but being at a pool just adds to the fun—and the importance of staying safe!

Lifeguards. When swimming, please make sure there is a lifeguard on duty. Lifeguards know CPR and know how to keep you safe. Whether you're a champion swimmer or just learning how to swim, being in a large body of water can really affect your safety. Be sure to follow all pool rules (which should be posted near the lifeguard) and always remember: NO diving in the shallow end and NO running on the pool deck! One unwritten rule that you should also be aware of is that you should NEVER participate in breath-holding contests, even if you're just "playing" with your friends. The water can be great, but you should only swim if you're supervised by a lifeguard.

CPR. Though lifeguards do know CPR, it's always a good idea to get certified. Though courses do cost a bit of money, the benefits much outweigh the costs, particularly if you ever have to employ any of the knowledge learned in a course on CPR. There are many different organizations across the globe that offer classes in CPR, so be sure to look into it if you know you'll be going to the pool a lot this July!

L I F E S T Y L E



Learning How to Swim. If you don't know how to swim, there are a few things you should do. Firstly, unless you're actively learning to swim under the supervision of a certified swim lesson instructor, you should always be wearing a life jacket. If you are actively learning to swim, there are a few things you can keep in mind to help you with various skills of swimming.

Kicking: Start off sitting on the wall kicking your feet in the water. Keep your knees straight and your toes pointed: no "bicycle legs!" Eventually, work your way into being able to hold onto the side with both elbows and kick your feet behind you in the water. Finally, start to utilize a kick board. Remember, small fast kicks work far better than big kicks.

Arms: When first learning how to swim freestyle, you'll probably feel naturally inclined to do "doggy paddle." Fight this inclination by making your hands into "ice cream scoops" and revolving them around in the water. Once you're able to stay on top of the water for several

strokes, change the position of your arms and hands to make straight hands with closed fingers. When doing freestyle, you MUST get your elbows out of the water and have them be the highest part of your arm out of the water.

Floating: When floating on your back, staying calm is key. Focus on getting your belly button up and looking up at the ceiling (which will naturally make your head go back in the water). Think about making a starfish or a gingerbread man with your body, and you should be good to go!

Protecting Your Skin. Though protecting your skin is preached in about every summer related piece of literature, it's especially important in the pool. Sunlight DOES penetrate through water, so even though you may be underwater, sunlight is still reaching you. Furthermore, sunlight reflects off of the surface of the water, so if you're sitting by the pool in the sun, you're not only hit by the direct sunlight, but also by the sunlight reflected from the surface of the water. ■

L I F E S T Y L E

REDECORATE YOUR SPACE

By Cheyenne (Desert)

At some point in time everyone feels the need to change their "space" around. Whether it's for aesthetic reasons or merely just because a change is due, redecorating is always a big choice!

If you're looking to redecorate any of your spaces right now, worry not! There are a few things you can decide on right now to help make redecorating go smoothly.

The first thing you can decide on is a color scheme. The colors you pick out should match each other and preferably be in the same tones. Decide if you're using warm or cool tones, then stick to it! This makes it easier to choose what kinds of accents and furniture items you'd like to use later on.

Next, think about what kind of look you're going for. Would you like a jungle theme? A minimalistic look? Or perhaps you want the comfy cottage style? Whatever you choose, make sure that everything matches and sticks to the theme you've decided on.



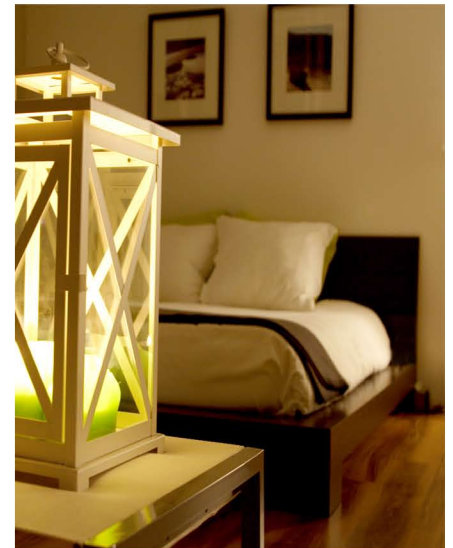
After you've planned out what you'd like to do, you should decide on how much money you're willing to spend. If you just want to change a few things to put the finishing touches on a look you already have going, then you probably don't want to or need to spend much money. But if you want to make a huge change, you're obviously going to need a little more money. So budget carefully and bargain shop in different stores. This way you should have less trouble getting the look you want.

Next, you'll have to ask yourself how much time you have to spend on the project. Ensure that you will have adequate time to finish your room or "space". Trying to redecorate in the midst of finals or another stressful time in your life really isn't that great of an idea. A great time to do it would be during the summer, when there are ample money-making opportunities and lots of time in which to do it in.

Last, but not least, you need to figure out your space and storage needs. Everyone has different storage and space needs. Obviously, a family would need a lot more space than a student would. However, their organizational needs are different. A student needs lots of space to store their schoolbooks and organize their work. After all, a clean space is crucial to getting good grades! If you have a family, then you'll need to make sure that you have original ideas for storing toys and other necessities. Above all, these needs have to be met. Without organization and enough space, even the coolest-looking room won't be that great. You have to remember that whatever space you're redecorating is going to be lived in.

If you need some ideas to help you out with these decisions, there are many different ways of finding ideas on how to decorate your space. Many magazines are completely devoted to home decorating, so you could flip through some of those for inspiration. Additionally, there's the World Wide Web. Try Google Images for some good ideas. If you're looking for how-to's or DIY type plans, again, Google is your friend.

When buying the things you need, make sure not to go over budget. IKEA and JSYK (in Canada) are great places to buy things to decorate. If you're feeling artsy, you could also buy some supplies and



redo an old piece of furniture. Sometimes just a simple update on something you've had lying around for ages can give your room a whole new look! Simple accent pieces are always great things to go for, as they're usually cheap and can put that polished look onto wherever you're decorating.

By planning each step of your decorating endeavor slowly and carefully, you should be able to easily create a beautiful and warm space to live in. The benefits of a new room are huge: it can inspire you to do better in school, start fixing or changing other areas of your life, or just make you feel better overall. Whatever you do, however, good luck and have fun! ■



JUST FOR FUN



ANTS ON A LOG | MOTIVATION STATION | MORE

ANTS ON A LOG

By Amy (Ronald Weasley)



A fun, healthy, recipe for children, teens, and adults!

Ingredients:

Celery, peanut butter, raisins.

Preparation:

1. Wash the celery with water and cut them into three inch pieces.
2. Spread peanut butter into the hollowed out portion of the celery.
3. Add a few raisins on top, to mimic what an ant looks like!

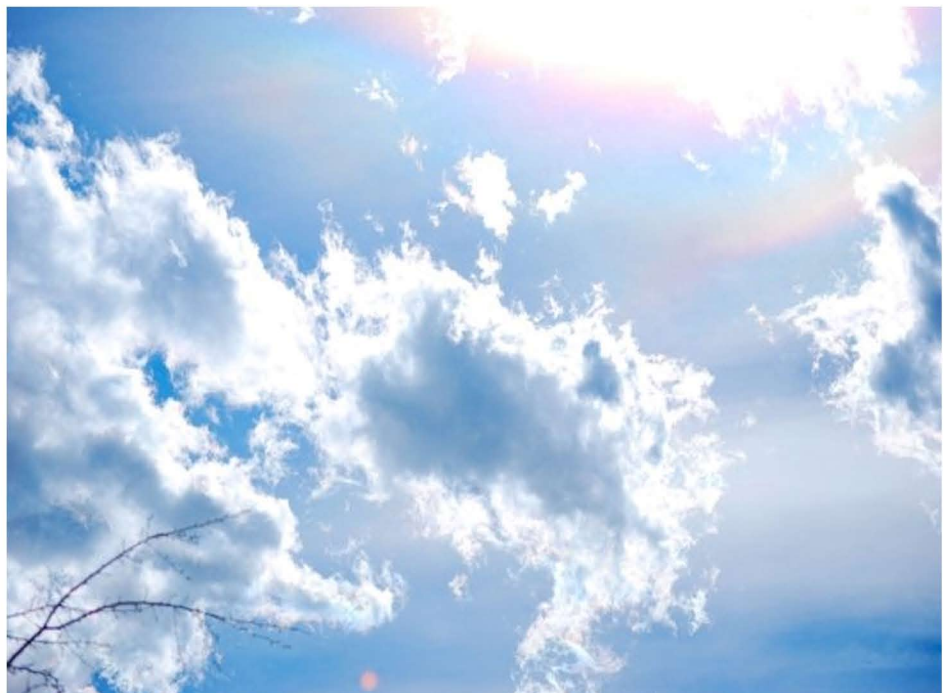
MOTIVATION STATION

By Katrina

"Hope is the dream of the waking man." - French proverb

Ah, it's summer again! July is great for laying out by the pool, taking a nice break from school, having a lot more time to relax and enjoy the sunshine and delicious smells of summer! Why not head to the beach or a theme park for fun? Have a happy July!

This month, we know how frustrating it can be to sit in traffic for minutes upon minutes in the hot summer air. It easily angers us, causing us to deflect that anger onto other drivers and pedestrians. Rather than getting upset about something out of your control, take time to smile at those driving around you. Remember, a smile is contagious!



FUN AND GAMES

BOARD GAME OF THE MONTH

By Amy (Ronald Weasley)



Sometimes we all forget how much fun it can be to round up a bunch of friends and have a good laugh together, while enjoying games such as checkers, Monopoly or Sorry! In light of remembering the fun and the classic games that we all used to love or those that may have not been so popular, each month we'll be discussing a fun game and what it's all about. This month, Scattergories will be explored and investigated!

The game of Scattergories, invented in 1988, is a challenging word game that involves intense competition and creativity. The game can be played with 2-6 players who are at least twelve years old. Each player is given eight double-sided category cards, along with a piece of paper and pencil. A 20-sided die is rolled to see what letter of the alphabet will be used that round, and the timer begins to tick shortly after. Each category card, chosen at the beginning of each round, lists topics such as: "Flavor of ice cream", "Item in the room", or "Sports team". Each player will have to think of items, names, or ideas that fit each topic on the category card that begin with the letter rolled on the alphabet die.

Remember though, this is a timed game, so the players must think quickly. Here is an example:

Category Card:

1. Name of a Fruit
2. Superhero
3. Vacation Destination
4. Novel

Letter: S

Possible Answers:

1. Strawberry, Starfruit
2. Superman
3. Spa
4. Storm Prey, The Story Sisters

Each player gets one point for every correct answer they put, unless another player put the same answer for a particular topic. For example, if two players put Superman as their superhero, neither player would get the point. No answer can be repeated per category card, either. The games moves very quickly, and can be stopped at just about any time. It's a great game for the family, or with friends! You can even try working in teams! Also, The game of Scattergories also comes in a "junior" version, so that younger children can have fun playing as well. The game costs roughly \$25, but it's totally worth it!

Just in case you want to tease your brain a little right now, try to find words that fit the following categories:

Letter: W

1. Something found in the jungle
2. Movie Title
3. Country
4. Material used to build
5. Item of clothing

DON'T MISS SUMMER FLICKS!

Despicable Me, July 9th: Gru, an unhappy mastermind intent on stealing the moon, will soon face an unlikely force: three orphaned girls who see good in his heart.

Predators, July 9th: An alien race which knows no mercy, the Predators, hunt a group of warriors in this riveting film. Will they make it?

Salt, July 23rd: CIA officer Evelyn Salt is accused of being a Russian spy. Will her journey to prove her innocence free or incriminate her?

- The Last Airbender** July 1st
- Inception** July 16th
- Ramona and Beezus** July 23rd
- Cats and Dogs: The Revenge of Kitty Galore** July 30th
- Dinner for Schmucks** July 30th

FUN STUFF

Crazy lingo: *Vatic*: An adjective describing someone/thing that has a characteristic of a prophet or prophecy

Food for Thought: Smelling bananas and/or apples can help you lose weight.

Can you say it? Telephone!
Teléfono (Spanish)
Telefon (Danish)
Telefone (Portugese)
Téléphone (French)

TeenHelp Trivia: Which forums have the most posts on TeenHelp?

TeenHelp Trivia:
Relationships and Dating,
Depression and Suicide,
and Self Expression!

TOP TEN: THINGS TO DO AT THE BEACH!

By Amy (Ronald Weasley)

Ten: Build a sandcastle or write things in the sand!



Nine: Swim out to a sand bar.

Eight: Collect shells.

Seven: Play beach volleyball.

Six: Bury your friends in the sand.

Five: Take crazy pictures of you and your friends!

Four: Bring a portable music player and dance.

Three: Fly a kite.

Two: Boogie board.

One: Have a picnic!

Bonus: Find out if the beach you visit allows for fires. If so, have a bonfire, but remember to be safe!



FUN AND GAMES

THE DEBATE ON PIRACY

By Lys de Grace



Amidst scandal on the high seas, the International Association of Perfidious Villains announced in the *Super or Square?* report (2009-2010) that pirates are cooler than ninjas. The report, released Friday, cites being on a boat as a major contributing factor to pirate coolness, with accessibility to rum, booty, and cannon balls as close follow-ups (not necessarily in that order).

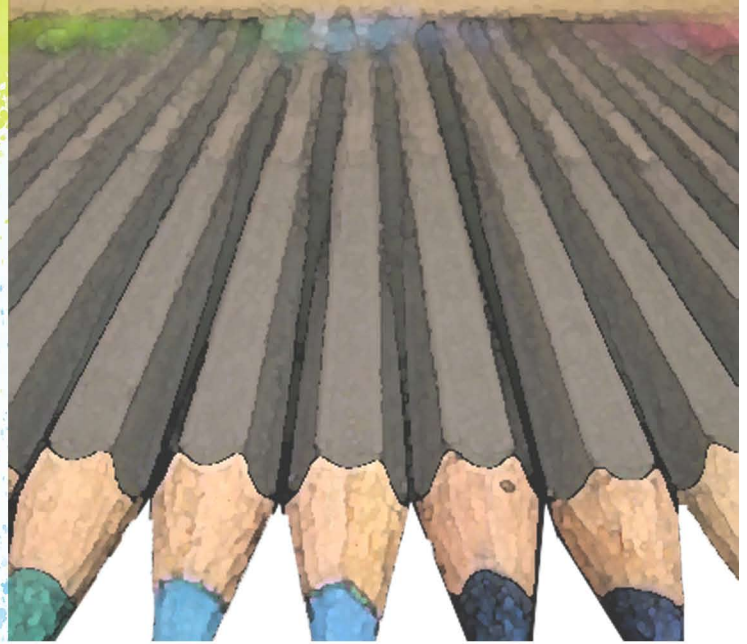
Allegations of coercion-by-cocktail are coming in from all directions, but the Society of Pirates says that until naysayers reveal themselves they "haven't got a peg-leg to stand on". "Think about it," Captain Crook said at a press conference Monday, "who do you trust more, me or someone you can't see?" We assumed the question was rhetorical.

"We're not saying ninjas aren't cool!" said Jane de Wall, speaking for Women Pirates Worldwide, "all we're saying is that pirates are cooler." The study also found that female pirates are thought to be 12% cooler than male pirates. Results were inconclusive as to the cause of this disparity, but researchers say it may be explained by greater quantity and quality of booty. ■

The breakdown, according to the *Super or Square* report released Friday by the International Association of Perfidious Villains:

Pirate: 50%
Ninja: 26%
Fairy: 14%
Bigfoot: 6%
Other: 4%

LIVE OUT LOUD



ICE

By Cheyenne (Desert)

I had a friend once, a long time ago. It was August; things were heavy and humid, everyone was too tired to remember who was going out with who and why. A shriveled notebook rested in her backpack with a pen. It was worn, torn and didn't have a single word in it. She never brought it up, nor did I ask.

Her hair was long and damaged, a rusty blonde color. It was cheap gold left in the rain for many nights. We walked to the corner store and I waited while she bought cigarettes with shaking fingers. It was worth it to watch the momentary glimpse of happiness in her eyes when she lit it up.

Once, she fell. Blood streamed from her palms and she licked the salty grit off her scratched skin. I watched in revulsion. In response, she stared at me and shrugged.

Why would she dress fashionably? There was no reason for her to; her sole purpose was to be my friend. That's what it seemed like, anyways. It was always her and I. My other friends didn't accompany us. We never went to the movies or to the pool. She didn't go to school. After my day, I would come back out of the cement building to meet up with her around the cold corner.

Romantic notions weren't there. They were absent and there was no sweetness in our relationship. A succulent cookie made of dust.

Our conversations were short and to the point. One thing I remember: she never asked me anything. My name and where I lived--that was it. I talked and she listened. In the course of the short month that we were together, she knew every one of my deepest darkest secrets. She never said anything or judged. We stood in the cold together and watched silver tigers chase starlets.

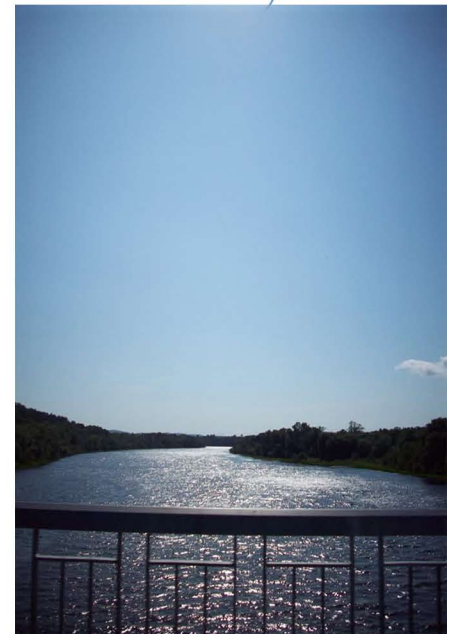
Sometimes I wondered about her. Was she okay at night? When I laid in my comfy bed, where was she?

There was a day when I followed her. At times, it seemed she was somewhere else. On the rare occasion that she touched me, my skin was scorched with static electricity. Her face would flush and whatever connection we had would instantly be burned. Though she rarely showed emotion, embarrassment would be apparent on her face. On that day, I hid behind dumpsters and felt much like a spy. She walked and walked, bought cigarettes, walked some more. The moon came out and the streetlights flickered on. Still she walked. When we got to the outskirts of town, she continued down the road which led to the next state over. I was cold and tired--why didn't she stop?

Giving up, I stood behind a tree and watched her continue down the road until I couldn't see her anymore.

But I knew she was still there. And somewhere in the world she is thinking of the right words to write in her notebook. My ice archangel.

Untitled by Mel



SELF EXPRESSION

The Price of Technology by Jessica (brokenteen)

The price of technology is
rather insane
So much to lose yet so
much to gain
What if this just wasn't
meant to be
And life should be simple
like I know what I see
Or what if it is more com-
plex than it seems
As tear drops run down
and the beauty of it
gleams
There is more to life than
what you may think
And everything could
change before you could
blink
Mind what matters be-
cause it will all be gone
Soon you will be thinking
"what went wrong"
So remember that your
love is more important
than it all
Before life changes and
you start to fall

Drifting Out to Sea by Casey (Casey)

• I floated on the water
out to sea
to search for a destiny
belonging to me

White water rapids
high tides
keeping my destiny
far away from me

I saw my destiny
floating on past
reached out to grab it
in my haste
knocked it off course
spinning away

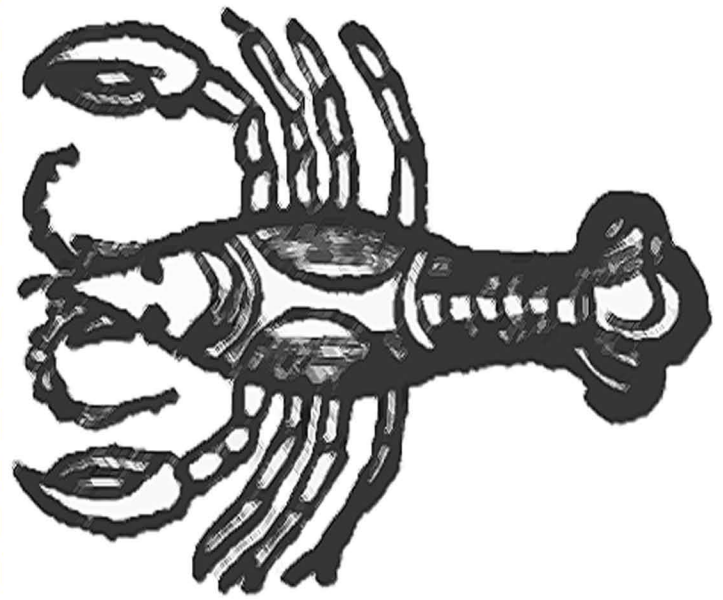
I stopped searching
for my destiny
just let it find me
floating here
drifting out to sea



Untitled by Joel (tk338)

Santorini by Katrina

READ THE STARS



by Casey (Casey.), Claire (QuackerJackWoop), and Robin (PSY)

CANCER

JUNE 21 - JULY 22

Happy birthday, Cancer!

Your focus for this July is about being 'Two'gether. This is a time to focus on yourself, your partner and your friends. Although problems may come your way this month, keeping people close to you will be a benefit. Just remember you need to give and take from all relationships! Anything you give this month will be recieved gratefully, and if you are currently looking for that special friendship, it's time to get out and meet someone new at a social gathering.

Strengths: You're nicknamed "the crab", but that doesn't have to reflect on your personality! Au contraire, mon ami! You're loving and emotional, your intuition protects you while your imagination takes you to new and exciting places. You may be cautious, a bit protective of yourself and others, but that never gets in the way of success.

Weaknesses: Being emotional means that your life can get pretty intense, pretty quickly! Remember that letting go is an important part of moving forward and growing, so as hard as it can be you must allow yourself to change.

AQUARIUS

JANUARY 20 - FEBRUARY 18

It takes **2** to tango and there will be a lot to dance about this month! July is a time for passion and love. If you've been looking for that special someone, you may be in luck! If you have someone, nurture your relationship. Effective communication is essential for all relationships, and now is the perfect time to work on that!

PISCES

FEBRUARY 18 - MARCH 20

This month is about being number **1**, Pisces. You can be very compassionate and selfless, but it's good to enrich your OWN life. Being assertive will improve your relationships. July will be ideal for planning ahead. For those of you who have just graduated, don't wait until the last minute to sort everything out!

ARIES

MARCH 20 - APRIL 20

Aries, your number is **3**. People say that good things come in threes, and this is what you should look out for this month. July will be a great month for you to make progress in practical areas of your life, so take this time to sort out your finances, begin planning for your future, and work towards progressing in your work or studies.

HOROSCOPES

TAURUS

APRIL 20 - MAY 21

Did you know love has a number? Love is in your sights this month, and your number is **6**. Both friendship and romantic relationships can give you support this month. July is a great time to build relationships, so spend lots of time with your family, children and partners this July, while the weather is perfect for any activity!

GEMINI

MAY 21 - JUNE 21

You should be feeling extra lucky this month! With lucky number **7** on your side, take time to gamble a little. We don't mean literally, unless you're old enough to gamble legally! But take some chances, with a friend or a crush, because you never know how things might work out! Try something new and be daring this summer!

LEO

JULY 22 - AUGUST 23

You are represented by the lion and the element fire, but you don't always have to be a leader; lions work in packs and fire needs oxygen to thrive. Don't forget about the necessities of life! You're the middle number, **5**, and your mood may be a little unsettled while you're bored, but by turning to your pack things will look brighter!

VIRGO

AUGUST 23 - SEPTEMBER 21

This month you should let go of grudges, Virgo, whether with an ex-friend or old relationship, or even your loved ones. Your number is **4**. Four is for stability and being grounded, but you can't be stable if you are living in the past, so let go of that anger and pain this month and embrace new beginnings.

LIBRA

SEPTEMBER 21 - OCTOBER 23

Keep **3** in mind as you make time for three things: friends, family, and yourself. July will be great for developing friendships, so take advantage of the great weather! Now is a good time to start figuring out the details of future plans. Too much activity could affect your emotions, so find time for yourself as well!

SCORPIO

OCTOBER 23 - NOVEMBER 22

Your number for July is "**infinity**" and you're looking at infinite possibilities this month! If you've been thinking about joining a new organization, now's the time to go for it! July will be ideal for developing friendships. You have the chance to be productive this summer, so stop thinking about your goals and start achieving them!

SAGITTARIUS

NOVEMBER 22 - DECEMBER 22

Your number is **6** and now is the time for travel. Perhaps a road trip down Route 66 is in order! Whether traveling in the literal sense or moving up in the workplace, July is for achievement! Avoid conflicts with influential people, as it may hinder you, but don't let anyone mistake your kindness for weakness and take advantage of you.

CAPRICORN

DECEMBER 22 - JANUARY 20

The number **8** symbolizes success and you will experience a great deal this month! School may be out, but continue exercising your mind. If you've been thinking about joining a club, July will provide many opportunities for you! This will also be a good month for traveling, whether it be to study abroad or go on a vacation.

Thanks!

THE WIND DOWN

ARTICLE SOURCES

THANK YOU to the following TeenHelp users for contributing to this issue of Avatar:

Claire (QuackerJackWoop)
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Joel (tk338)
Maria (Gidig)

Cause of the Month: Vitamin Angels: www.vitaminangels.org
News that Affects You: June 2010 in Review: www.ap.org;
www.bbc.co.uk; www.cnn.com
Sun, Sand, Oil?: www.bp.com; www.cnn.com

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THANKS FOR READING

Thank you for taking the time to read this issue of Avatar! To read past issues, or for more information, visit the Avatar homepage at www.teenhelp.org/avatar.

All comments, questions, suggestions or criticisms should be directed towards the editorial team. Email us at avatar@teenhelp.org. We look forward to hearing from you, and hope you enjoy the next edition of Avatar!



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